This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

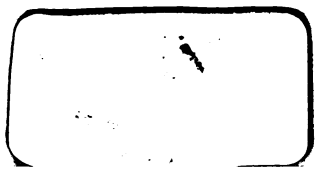
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

600068700R



MARTIN'S VINEYARD.

LONDON:
GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

MARTIN'S VINEYARD.

BY

AGNES HARRISON.

London:
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, LOW, & SEARLE,
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.

1872.

(*All rights reserved.*)

149. g. 125.

MILLICENT'S WORK IN MARTIN'S VINEYARD.

CHAPTER I.

IT is high noon of Midsummer-day, 1826. The sun blazes down on a broad stretch of yellow sand. The tide is falling with long, listless waves, that idly leave a fringe of seaweed and shells and tangled ocean débris, like a waving ribbon, at its highest tide mark; farther up among the rocks that skirt the wooded shore are quiet pools of clear water, freshly left by the tide. The whole air is still in the heat of noon; there is scarcely a whisper of breeze, though on one hand the great gleaming blue floor of the Atlantic spreads away to the sky.

This is what you would have seen had you stood at noon on that Midsummer-day on the shore of Martin's Vineyard, an island whose latitude we need not name, it being enough to

say that it lies some five miles from the shore of the New England coast. It is little more than an undulating rocky ridge exposed to sea and sky, still in its general look bearing such resemblance to the mainland, as makes it easy to believe what the learned affirm, that at some dim period of revolutionary storms it had been riven from the coast, and so left anchored low among the breakers out to sea. But to the eye of a fanciful traveller, as he sails from the mainland towards it, the island takes another form. Stretching long and low among the waves, and moving as it seems on the unsteady surface of the sea, it looks like some huge monster sunning himself, and ready, on your nearer approach, to sail farther and farther out from land, or dive to his native depths below. The likeness is the more striking because the one end of the island runs into a narrow tail-like line, and the upper part, which would fairly represent the monster's head, as jagged with rocky teeth that tear and gnaw the breakers into white and angry foam at every rising tide.

There is no need to enter much into the early history of the island, or speculate as to how many centuries it lay, an inanimate ridge of rock and sand, with nothing but a few dwarf sumachs and rushy grass upon it, to bloom and fade in spring and autumn, and make a languid response

to the changes of the seasons, before a colony of Quakers, driven from the Puritan community of Massachusetts, fleeing from those shores, as their persecutors themselves had done from England, came and settled here. And the island supplied the settlers with new fields of enterprise, and gave them its own rugged welcome. Driven from their fields and homes on the mainland, they found here the ocean spread before them new and wide pastures for the whale fishing; and on the lower end of the island there were peat-fields which yielded fuel against the winter's storms. In time the handful of quiet and peaceable people, by patience and hardy industry, tamed the rough shelter into a fruitful and profitable home for them and their children. So at length, from out of the simple and noble principles of their religious belief, and a singular simplicity and purity of household life, they developed into a compact, hardy, and prosperous community, which the hardships and privations that attended their position only seemed to weld into firmer strength. Learning perhaps a lesson from their own sufferings, they treated with kindness and conciliation the few Indians who, like themselves, had sought shelter on the island, and were repaid by finding in these usually uncertain neighbours peaceable and harmless helpers in the work of peat gather-

ing and even in the whale fishing. As time went on, and their numbers were increased by fresh emigrants from the mainland, not exclusively of their own religious body, the Quakers had a still more striking opportunity of displaying the gentle and pacific principles that distinguish them as a sect. A number of Independents—the descendants, probably, of their former persecutors—were allowed to settle unmolested on the island, and the Town Council granted them a portion of land for the erection of a place of worship. But essentially the island belonged to the larger religious body: the mayor and members of the Town Council were nearly all "members of the Society," and wore the plainest dress, the collarless coat and broad-brimmed hat; some even going so far as to abjure buttons on their coats as a useless and unreasonable luxury. The sailors on the wharf, the children in the school, the people in the shops, all addressed each other as "thee," the "plain language," as it was called; and a certain look of colourless cleanliness and staid contentment pervaded even the outside of the houses. The simplicity and gravity of life, and the industrious habits of the people, made crime, or even a breach of the social order, almost unknown. There was a prison certainly, but then no living inhabitant remembered that any one had ever been confined

in its cells. It stood on a lonely and desolate part of the shore, and perhaps was the only building on the whole island that seemed sinking into dilapidation through neglect and want of use. It was becoming quite mossy and overgrown, and about it hung that look of respectable neglect which shadows the venerable form of the stocks in remote English villages, where a spirit of fond conservatism holds on with reverent attachment to the forms of bygone needs.

It was narrated that in some remote and problematic period a prisoner had been placed in the jail,—for what crime is not recorded,—and that from him had come a respectful message to the honourable Town Council, stating that he was much annoyed by the presence of sheep which strayed into the prison; that he must beg for the removal of the intruders, or be obliged to refuse, however reluctantly, to remain longer in confinement.

This story is, as I said, somewhat traditional, and, at any rate, it belongs to a period more remote than the year 1826, with which we have to do; for on that particular Midsummer-day of which we have spoken, the hinges of the prison gates were rusty with long disuse, and the sheep browsed peacefully outside the enclosure, or lay panting under the shadow of the prison wall. For it was Midsummer-day, with

a cloudless sky, and just noon; but a few moments before the clock on the State House of the little town had tolled out twelve. Almost before the last stroke had died away on the sunny air, a crowd of children, boys and girls, had streamed down the steps of a trim-looking frame building that stood facing the State House on the opposite side of the square. With much clatter of feet and chatter of tongues the crowd had dispersed on their various ways homewards, and a few minutes later Priscilla Dean, the teacher, appeared under the low wooden doorway of the school-house, in lavender dress and little drab hat; and, after locking the door with the big key which was hanging at her waist, she proceeded, under the shade of a large cotton umbrella, down the street. Her work was over for the day, that afternoon being a holiday. But we will leave Priscilla Dean to pursue her path alone, and follow three of the children, who had turned the first lane leading to the open sands, the nearest way homewards.

The two girls are dressed very much alike, though by the first glance it may be seen that they are not sisters. The elder is fair-haired, brown-eyed, with a cheerful, sensible face; the younger is a rosy-cheeked, black-eyed child, whose features at this moment, however, do not wear the pleasantest expression. Both are

dressed in plain print frocks and tippets, and buff cotton sun-bonnets. The boy, a big, stout fellow of seven, unencumbered with a jacket this warm day, wears a white shirt, to which are fastened his short trousers, reaching only to the knee; his legs thence downwards are clothed in blue knitted stockings. Over his shoulders he carries his school-books and slate slung by a strap. He trudges on through the soft hot sand before his companions at a steady energetic pace, which seems to be the cause of that discomposure which we noticed on the face of the younger girl.

"I'll just sit right down on the sand, Lizzie, if Dan will go on so fast!" she says at last, in a tone of high discontent.

"Don't go so fast, Dan," said the elder girl, who, by a certain likeness to the boy, one might guess to be his sister; "it's no good hurrying so!"

"It's enough to give any body a stroke, walking so fast in the heat, and mother says so: it's horrid; I feel as if I was being cooked," continued the younger girl.

Dan slackened his pace slightly, but neither turned round nor offered any answer to the remarks of his companions.

"His face is awful red," continued Abby, "and he'll be sure to get sick, and I shall not

care a bit; but just feel my slate, Lizzie: it's red hot! And just look at that boy, how fast he is going again. I think thy brother is real stupid, Lizzie!"

"No he ain't," replied Lizzie, quietly, but sturdily. "People have a right to walk just how they like, thee knows," she continued, having a republican sense of the inalienable right of the individual to liberty and the pursuit of happiness in his own way. But Abby, hot and irritated, was not in a condition for the reception of abstract truth; and Lizzie, seeing that her companion's response to the proposition she had just made was likely to be tears, said, cheerfully,—

"Oh, Abby, listen; suppose we let Dan go on, while we stay and have a bath in the pools: mother said I might, and thy mother always lets thee, and Dan can go on and tell them."

The plan was tempting, and Abby's temper improved quite suddenly under the prospect.

"Maybe," said Abby, prudently remembering the troublesome burden of books, "maybe Dan had better carry our books home: he could just lay mine on the steps as he passes our house, and I'd take them in myself,"

Dan, who had stopped to receive the energetic directions of Lizzie, looked Abby calmly in the face on hearing this proposition, and then re-

adjusting his satchel as if he had not heard her remark, prepared to walk on; but Abby was not to be baffled.

"They are so apt to get wet when we're bathing," she said, "and we shall be late, maybe, and thee is going straight home—and—every thing."

"I guess it won't matter much whether thy books get home before thee or not, Abby," said Dan gravely. "Thy mother ain't going to cook them for dinner, I suppose?"

He didn't mean it as a joke at all, but Abby laughed quite cheerfully, and began with the greatest good humour to help Dan to pack the slate and books in his own strap. Lizzie looked a little grave at the arrangement; but Dan, whatever his thoughts might be, said nothing, and, shouldering the books, he trudged on, while the two little girls turned up among the rocks to the shady pools. Throwing down their slates and books, and seating themselves on the rocks, they began to undress. They proceeded with great regularity to unfasten each other's dresses and skirts, and laid their clothes neatly on the dry stones.

"It's cooler here than in the sea," said Lizzie, dabbing one naked foot in the water while she unlaced the other boot.

"I cannot help thinking of sharks when I

bathe in the sea." said Abby. "There *are* sharks off the shore by the try-houses [1] where they throw the refuse from the fish."

"Yes," said Lizzie. "Father said there were some always hanging about there watching: I cannot bear to think of it. I like to bathe in the pools because one can see to the bottom."

"Oh, I don't feel afraid of water, does thee, Lizzie?" said Abby, who was now putting her stockings one within the other, as she flirted the sparkling drops of water from her little feet.

"I don't mind the sea," said Lizzie, "but I don't like the dark."

"Neither do I," said Abby thoughtfully; "I don't see much what dark is good for; it frightens folk so."

"I always ask mother," said Lizzie, "to leave the door open when she goes down stairs at night, so that I can hear father's voice reading, and sometimes, if it gets very lonesome, I call out to Dan, and if he's asleep, I listen to the clock."

"Dan don't mind the dark, I suppose," [illegible] Abby; "boys never do."

"Well, not so much," [illegible] fully. "He does a little, [illegible] owns up to, for the [illegible]

[1] Try-houses are [illegible] blubber is cut, [illegible]

mother if he need say his prayers of a morning, because, he said, if Providence would take care of him in the night, he'd take care of himself in the day."

"Wasn't that queer?" said Abby, stuffing her stockings inside her empty boots, and setting them in a dry corner.

"Yes, and then mother began telling us how many dangers might happen us in the day, how we might get drowned, or struck by the sun, if Providence didn't take care of us all the time. Since then," said Lizzie, holding her small white feet in her hands, and looking gravely into the clear water of the pool, "since then, Dan fell out of the apple-tree and might have broken his neck, James Tappen says, and I think, and Dan thinks a little, too, that as it was in the evening, half dark and half light, perhaps Providence took half care of him, let him ge[illegible]ne bruises, but not break his neck."

the streak of sunshine between the rocks and plunged into the cool, clear pool. The water rose high above their heads, and their merry laughter rang on the air. They were so merry that they did not perceive a small figure approaching them among the rocks and sea-weed. It was a child of perhaps four years old, with a round baby face much sun-burnt. Her brown eyes looked out half shyly from under the thick unevenly cut dark hair which fell over her brows. A torn hat hung on her neck, her little frock and pinafore were old and ragged, though the material was fine and the colour bright. In her little brown hands she carried a big bunch of yellow flowers. Behind her came a kid, which stopped here and there to nibble a bit of sea-grass, but, after each pause, trotted more quickly in pursuit of the tiny creature, whom, small as she was, it seemed to regard as its protector.

The child came toddling on towards the pool where the two little girls were bathing, smiling as she heard their laughter and merriment, and then stood still a moment or two looking at them in silence as they gambolled and shouted and tossed up the water, too much occupied with their own amusement to observe the new comer. The kid also stood stock still in amazement.

"Me fim too!" said the little creature.

The children suddenly stopped their play and gazed at the tiny visitor, who seemed to have risen from among the rocks.

"Abby, look there," said Lizzie, squeezing the water out of her eyes. "Who is thee, little girl?" she continued, looking at the child.

The young creature smiled and nodded her head, but said nothing.

"What is thy name?" asked Lizzie.

"Me Milly," said the baby.

"Where does thee live?" said Abby.

The child did not seem to comprehend.

"What a queer little thing," said Abby. "I never! Why, Lizzie, she's got a *red* frock on, only it's very dirty."

Red, I should say, was a colour not seen in any thing but flowers among the grave inhabitants of Martin's Vineyard.

"Me fim too," said Milly again.

"Does thee want to bathe?" said Lizzie; "thee can if thee likes; only thee is too small to undress thyself, and we are too wet."

"Es, me fim too," repeated the child.

"Did thy mother say thee might" inquired Lizzie, gravely, drawing nearer to he edge of the pool.

Milly made no reply to the question, but came towards Lizzie, nodded her head, and

smiled brightly. "Nice girl," she said, "unbutton me's fock."

Abby did not look pleased. The child had interrupted her game with Lizzie. "I wonder where she comes from," she said. "I wish she'd go back to her mother."

"Where does thee live?" asked Lizzie, sitting calmly in the water, and staring with great gravity at the child. Milly pointed up towards a path running among the rocks, and opening on the place where they were standing. Abby rolled over twice in the water towards her companion.

"She's the child belonging to the stranger—the man that lives up there all alone in the cottage, and gets the sea-weed. I heard father and mother talking about him, saying he had no wife, and that they were afraid he was no good. Father said he never came to meeting any how."

"Perhaps he stays at home to mind the little girl," said Lizzie. "If he's got no wife and no 'help,' why of course it's natural he should stay at home, for she's 'most too little to come to meeting with him, and being a little girl she'd have to sit on the women's side alone, and get scared, and behave badly."

Milly, who had drawn nearer during this talk between the two girls, stood gazing wistfully

at them, with her thumb in her mouth. They seemed to have forgotten her. She turned quickly away.

"Tum, dear," she said to the kid, "tum home."

"Here, little girl, little Milly," called Lizzie, "come here, and thee shall have a bath. I will unbutton thy dress."

The little creature ran back, and seated herself on the sand. Lizzie came out of the water, dripping like a pretty fish, and performed the unbuttoning she had promised, while Milly threw off her hat, and tugged first at one and then at another of her small boots. In another moment the garments were slipped off, and the tiny creature was stamping and splashing in the water. The little arms and feet were very brown, showing that she had often been on the dry hot sand without boots as well as without stockings; but the rest of the small baby form was fair and pure as milk, and her face seemed pretty as a dark dewy rose-bud, while she laughed and shouted with joy among the sparkling showers of spray thrown up by her companions. Lizzie held her little brown feet as she floated on her back, and laughed to see the dark hair which spread wide like sea-weed on the water, for her hair was long behind, unlike Abby's and her own, which was neatly and closely clipped all round.

"Thee funny little thing," said Lizzie, when at last they all emerged from the water. "Who cut thy hair across the forehead like this?"

"Faser," lisped Milly, "cut it wiz big scissors."

"Now thee lace up one boot, and I'll lace the other," continued Lizzie, beginning to put on the child's clothes in a careful, motherly way. "No, no, thee mustn't do so—every hole, Milly, put the lace in every hole."

The child made some attempt to follow the instructions; and then, finding the task hopeless, she placed her fingers in her mouth, poked her feet out before her, and contemplated them with a comical expression, half of seriousness, half of fun.

"That's not good," said Lizzie reprovingly, "little girls should try to do things for themselves."

Milly smiled, and softly pressed two small fingers into Lizzie's soft cheeks, so as to force her lips to a smile.

"Nice, pitty girl," she said. Lizzie could not help smiling, though she had to lace up the boots herself. She had done none of her own dressing yet, and Abby was putting on her tippet.

"Come, Lizzie," said Abby, "do be quick; there's the meeting-house clock striking one, and we ought to be at home now."

Lizzie began to array herself with speed, giving an eye, however, to Milly, who was putting on her dress.

"I'll button it neatly. Oh, dear! dear! there are scarcely any buttons on it: never mind, I will pin it as neat as I can. I suppose her father can't sew buttons on."

"Oh hurry, Lizzie," said Abby, who was now quite dressed and ready to start.

"Yes, I'm just ready; just wait one minute, Abby. Now then, Milly, let me tie thy hat on. And now thee must run home as fast as thee can, or maybe father will scold a little girl for staying away so long."

"Nice girl," said Milly, patting Lizzie's cheeks as she knelt before her to tie her hat. "Me love you, nice girl." Abby had already gone a few paces off, and was kicking up the sand impatiently, and began to call, "Lizzie, do come, or I will go without thee."

"There," said Lizzie, kissing the little brown face, "I must go now. Thee run home straight to father, there's a good child."

"Don't go," said Milly, "don't go."

"Yes, I must go," said Lizzie. "Now don't be a naughty little girl. Run home straight, and then may be some day I'll come to thee again, but I can't stay now: I shall be late for dinner, and mother will be grieved with me."

Lizzie led the child to the entrance of the path, and, kissing her once more, sprang quickly away after Abby, who had now walked some distance down the sands.

Milly stood a moment or two watching, and then, as Lizzie disappeared among the rocks, she ran down the pathway after her as fast as her feet would carry her, the kid faithfully following at her heels.

"Me tum wiz you," called Milly, "me tum too," and she ran on and on. Her little voice began to fail as she ran. She could see the figures of the two girls in the distance, hurrying swiftly from her, but still the little feet trotted on and on over the hot sand, till the heart gave way at last, and she sat down on the shore crying bitterly. The sea lay like a great dazzling silver field, the boundless sky above, and the desolate yellow shore stretched far away; and the child,—except for the kid that now stood beside her, snuffing in mild curiosity at her tearful, half-buried face—was alone.

CHAPTER II.

THE two children parted company very soon, Abby Price turning into the garden gate of a neat but small white house, the little garden of which opened on to the village street.

On the white steps lay, sure enough, the slate and copy-book—the slate bearing upon it, in round hand writing, the words, "Abby Price, her slate, is an idle girl," which, though not a grammatical sentence, pointed a plain moral to the young person in question, and the writing of which had soothed Dan's feelings not a little.

Lizzie Thirlwell hurried onward farther up the shore, and then mounting the sandy ridge, the last barrier between the ocean and the land, she entered a shady orchard, so old that the trees, gnarled and crooked and bent by the sea winds, met over-head, and formed low, shady vistas, like those in the crypt of a cathedral: through these arches the wind from the sea blew cool and fresh, and beneath them, sheep

were quietly browsing. Lizzie, delighted to reach the shade, pulled off her sun-bonnet, and swung it gaily round and round before the face of an old sheep that had stopped nibbling to gaze with a stupid and surprised expression at the child as she came through the grass.

"Ba-ba," said Lizzie, shaking her head at the mild woolly countenance. "Bo, thee stupid old thing; thee needn't pretend thee doesn't know me, when I have brought thee lettuce-leaves so often." Quite unmoved by the energy of Lizzie's manner, the sheep turned away with some dignity and went on nibbling, while Lizzie skipped towards a gate leading out of the orchard on to a paved court, which, shaded with trees, lay at the back of a large white frame-house. The child wiped her feet on the mat at the door, and passed through the cool passage into the kitchen, where, through the open windows, the breeze came cool and pleasant from the sea, touched with the scent of the locust-trees which shaded the house on one side, and which, spreading their blossom to the sunshine above, cast below a delicate green twilight filled with the contented murmur of thousands of bees, which did their work among its fragrant blossoms.

At the fireplace in the kitchen stood a tall, spare woman, busily occupied in stirring the contents of three or four steaming pans, which

were sputtering and sending forth a pleasant odour, suggestive of dinner to come.

This was a rather striking-looking personage: a brown cotton sun-bonnet was set up right on her head, somewhat after the manner of a helmet, and in the excitement of her occupation she had shouldered a long-handled "dipper" or ladle. This act, together with a singular erectness of figure, gave an almost military decision to her appearance, and a general preparing for an engagement could not look more sternly resolute than this intelligent but grim-visaged person as she regarded her array of pans, and awaited the time when the contents of each should reach the state of absolute perfection, and when should come the triumphant moment of "dishing up."

This was Prudence Jones, a person well respected in the island, both for her integrity and intelligence. Prudence eked out her living by acting as general "help" to her richer neighbours, either in seasons of festivity, sickness, or trouble, and at this time she was acting as temporary servant to Mrs. Thirlwell while her own "help" was having her week's holiday at the "main," as the islanders termed the opposite shore. In character as in person Prudence had sharp angularities not always attractive to others, but her moral character was upright as her figure, her integrity

as unbending as her back. She was one of those persons who have a saturnine delight in showing themselves at their worst, while they *do* the best for every one. It is difficult to say why, when she was tending a sick person with thoughtful and sensible care, or when she was helping in the important duties of a burial or a wedding-dinner, she only testified her feelings of human sympathy by grim remarks on the instability of earthly things, and the folly of earthly hopes! Equally difficult was it to say why, "day in and day out," as her neighbours said, she wore on the top of her head a brown cotton sun-bonnet of hideous proportions, unless it was that it gave a more forbidding expression to her already sufficiently sombre countenance. The appendage was laid aside only on Sundays, when she changed it for a black silk bonnet of thoroughly orthodox dimensions, and then, with her hymn-book in her hand, walked in stern serenity to the Independent Meeting-house. Possibly by the softer and more yielding character of this Sabbath head-dress, or possibly by something of the rest which hallows the puritan Sabbath, and which had found its way to the secret, well-guarded chamber of her heart, a milder expression had been given to the sharp features of Prudence Jones. But there was nothing of either Sabbath rest or mildness

in her visage as she now turned, somewhat heated from the fire, and greeted little Lizzie Thirlwell.

"Wal, Lizzie, you've come at last, I'm glad to see: your mother's been 'most distracted 'bout you!"

"Oh, Prudence, I did come so quick along the sands, and it isn't so late either. I can tell it isn't *awful* late by all the pans being on the range."

"Oh well, in course you can have it what time you like, only me and the clock 'll have our own opinions, I guess, all the same!"

Lizzie did not seem at all daunted by the sarcasm of this speech, but came to the table, on which dishes were set out, and on which stood a bowl of batter ready for frying.

"Oh, Prudence, are we going to have fritters? ain't that nice?" said Lizzie, taking the spoon to stir the soft creamy batter, and then proceeding with further boldness to lift the lid of a dish set by the fire, to peep at its contents.

"Well, now, it's my opinion you'd better keep your hands off them dishes, 'cause fritters won't taste better with burnt fingers: they're mighty hot, some of them. You'd best wash your hands ready for dinner now. Dan's been in this good while, and your mother's been twice to the gate to see if you was coming. I guess she thought you was drowned or something."

The child was off in a moment. "Mother," she called, "mother." A voice answered from above, and Lizzie flew up the stairs, and, following the sound of the voice, entered a small room, into which she descended by three steps. Green outside shutters excluded the bright sunshine, and filled the room with a soft green light. A tall, dark-eyed woman stood in the middle of the room, while on the table before her were piled heaps of clean clothes, which, after sprinkling them with water from a bowl, she was folding into tight bundles for ironing, and laying each as it was ready in a large basket at her feet. Her dress, which was very plain, was made of a soft grey colour, finished with a muslin band at the throat and wrist, and her thick dark hair was gathered under a white muslin cap. But what a contrast to the rigid colourlessness of the dress was the sweet and beautiful face which she turned towards Lizzie as she entered!

"Mother," said the child, "Prudence says thee thought maybe I was drowned or something, and I want to tell thee about it."

"I am glad thee has come, Lizzie," said her mother. "Hang up thy bonnet and books, my child; thee looks heated."

"Oh, it's only with standing near the kitchen fire, mother: it's lovely and cool in here; and

then we had such a nice bath, mother; and what does thee think?"

"I think you stayed rather long in the water, maybe," said her mother, with a smile. "But lay thy books on the shelf, Lizzie, and wash thy hands and face, and thee shall tell me all about."

The child ran into another room, and, amidst her ablutions, called,—

"Oh, mother, it's so funny: I wish I had washed myself before: I do want to tell thee about it so much; and I want to tell Dan too. I wish he'd come in. Now, mother, I'm just ready—only just to wipe my hands and put the comb by. There—now I'm done. Oh, I'm so glad! And so, mother," said Lizzie, rushing into the room again, and springing on her knees on a chair, with her elbows rested on the table, "and so, mother, Abby and I sent Dan on, and we went to bathe in the pools. Abby and I ran in together, and made such a splash!"

"I think you forgot the time a little, Lizzie," said her mother, smiling.

"Well, mother, I guess we did. But this was the way of it. While we were bathing, a little girl came down from among the rocks: she wasn't one of the school-children at all, but a little thing, smaller than Abby's little sister Rebecca. She had a goat with her, and she

had such a pretty little face, and her hair was quite long down on her shoulders, and cut short over her eyes."

Lizzie's mother looked interested, and Lizzie, excited by the effect she saw her story produced, continued,—

"She had such a pretty little face, mother, and such a pretty way of talking and skipping about on her little feet; and then, mother,"—Lizzie hesitated a little and looked grave,—"she had a red dress on."

"Who was she?" said Mrs. Thirlwell: "did she not say what her name was?"

"She said it was 'Milly;' but she could not talk very much."

"You should have taken her home, Lizzie. Did she not tell you where she lived?"

"Oh yes, mother, and it was quite near; but we could not take her home, we were in the water. Abby says she has no mother, only a father, and he lives in the little cottage by the little bay."

"Oh!" said the mother, gravely, "that is the man Keston's house."

Lizzie fixed her shrewd brown eyes on her mother's face. "Is he a bad man, mother?"

"Bad!" said Mrs. Thirlwell. "What should make thee ask such a question, Lizzie? I never call any one bad."

"Only thee said, the 'man' Keston, instead of neighbour 'John' or 'Thomas' Keston, thee knows, as other people are called, and——"

"I don't know what his name is exactly," said her mother, smiling. "He is a stranger, and I know nothing about him."

"He has been here a long time, mother; why is he a stranger?"

"Because he makes himself a stranger," said Mrs. Thirlwell: "he lives to himself, and he never goes to meeting, or meets his neighbours."

"Prudence never goes to meeting either, mother, does she?" said Lizzie, with some hesitation, but quite unable to resist the desire to get to the bottom of what she felt had a touch of mystery about it.

"Prudence goes every first day to her own place of worship," said the mother, "and is highly respected by every one."

"Highly respected!" repeated Lizzie, thoughtfully, resting her chin on her hands, and fixing her bright eyes on her mother's face.

For a moment or two Mrs. Thirlwell went on with her sprinkling in silence, and then, deciding at once that the child's curiosity would most probably be stilled by straightforward statement, she said,—

"There are some reasons, Lizzie, which I

cannot explain to thee, and which I do not wish thee to ask questions about, that make thy father and myself feel we cannot respect John Keston as highly as we should wish."

"Oh!" said Lizzie.

"Come," said her mother, "I hear Prudence bringing in the dinner, and we will go downstairs."

"Lizzie took her mother's hand, and hopped down, first on one foot, then on the other, till she reached the bottom of the flight. Something was still on her mind, for, as she reached the bottom step, she said,—

"Mother, what is a smuggler?"

"A smuggler, child? who ever told thee about a smuggler?"

"Only Abby said——I'm not going to ask any questions, mother, but it's about John Keston," said Lizzie hesitatingly.

"Go on," said her mother.

"Abby said," continued the child, "she heard James Tappen say one day, no doubt that John Keston had not been a fisherman all his life, nor yet a sailor; and then, mother, he said in a low voice, only Abby heard, that perhaps he'd been a smuggler."

"Don't repeat this again, Lizzie," said Mrs. Thirlwell. "Never repeat evil things said of any one."

"No, mother. Abby says smugglers are

awful wicked people," continued Lizzie, hoping by the remark to elicit some further information on the interesting subject, "and that they carry pistols under their clothes, and never go out till night, and that they can dive in the sea, and stay there just like fish."

"That is quite untrue, Lizzie; don't listen to any more such tales."

"Then smugglers don't do such wicked things at all, mother," said Lizzie, a little disappointed, "and John Keston may be a smuggler without being any harm?"

"A smuggler is a man who follows an unlawful trade on the coast; I never heard of one's being on the island; and John Keston, as far as I know, does nothing but fish and till his land, like any one else."

"But father and thee don't approve of John Keston; maybe because he lets his little girl be so untidy looking?"

Mrs. Thirlwell looked momentarily annoyed.

"Maybe it is so partly. I am glad you should have helped the little thing, and been kind to her, and let her have a bath with you this once; but in future, Lizzie, I shall feel best satisfied for neither thee nor Dan to go to the cottage, or to play with the child."

Lizzie ate her dinner, still thinking of the prohibition, and wondering over the mystery of

the little child in the red dress, and her strange father living among the rocks. It was all deeply interesting to Lizzie; and, it would seem, the matter of smugglers had not been quite banished from her mind.

"Dan," she said, as they went out to play in the shady orchard after dinner, "come down to the hollow apple-tree; I've got a new game; it will be splendid; it's called 'Smugglers;' and we must play that we're awfully wicked, and wear pistols, and have secret places to hide in that nobody knows of. Come, and I'll tell thee all about it."

And the two children raced away under the apple-trees, the sunshine glinting on their heads as they passed through the grass among the quiet sheep, to play at the new and delightful game of rapine and adventure.

CHAPTER III.

RICHARD and Elizabeth Thirlwell, the father and mother of Dan and Lizzie, were among the most highly esteemed settlers of Martin's Vineyard. Richard Thirlwell was a whaler, and at the time of which we are speaking his own fine vessel, the "Ezra Hooper," lay at the wharf side of the little town. He was not a native of the place, but had come to live there some ten years previously, when he married Elizabeth Hooper, a young woman of the island, and in that place had been born both of their children, besides one that died in infancy.

Ezra Hooper, the father of Mrs. Thirlwell, had been an important person in the community. He owned many houses in the little town, besides the large and comfortable house of "White Farm," which went to his daughter on her marriage, and in which they had lived ever since. He had also been a successful whaler, till the later years of his life, when,

being twice elected mayor of the town, he found his public duties such that he was glad to hand over the command of his vessel to his son-in-law, for Ezra Hooper was not a man to do things by "halves." He fulfilled the trust given him by his fellow-townsmen with the most vigorous integrity and care. Cautious in coming to a conclusion on any important matter, he was most fearless in expressing his mind when it was once made up; and his voice in town council, or in private conference, had, as many a citizen of the island said, "a peculiar weight."

Elizabeth Hooper's mother died when a child, and her father sent her to a school in Boston to be educated; a rather unheard of thing, at that day among the people of the island.

When Elizabeth returned from school at sixteen she was pronounced to be the handsomest among the group of young women who filled the lower benches of the "meeting" on the women's side. And certainly there was no prettier sight of a Sunday morning than that witnessed when the father and daughter came up the meeting-house yard—for such did the townsfolk call the pleasant garden-like enclosure that sloped towards the sea—the old man, with his erect form, his strongly marked features,

and his iron-gray hair, dressed in his knee-breeches and gray stockings, and broad shovel hat, and the graceful dark-eyed girl, clad in her delicate-tinted quaker-dress, leaning on his arm.

One spring Elizabeth Hooper's health failed, and her anxious father took her to Providence, to place her under the care of a doctor of note. The doctor advised that she should be kept away from the cold winds of the island for a while, and during the two early spring months, Elizabeth was left to pay a visit to an aunt who lived in Providence. During this time, she constantly wrote to her father gay and sprightly letters, telling of her doings in the city, and the old man bore patiently what to him was a time of sore trial.

In the early summer Elizabeth returned to her home full of beauty, with health restored, and with an added charm in such a tender sweetness of manner as made her father feel himself more than repaid for his two lonely months of waiting. "And now," said he, "will come years of content and happiness, and Elizabeth will stay quietly at home with her old father." But then came a sudden disclosure, which seemed to break rudely on all his dreams of peace and serenity.

Elizabeth was followed by a letter, in which she was asked in marriage by a young man who

had wooed and won her heart during the visit to her aunt. Ezra Hooper was displeased, and almost indignant; he had no desire that his daughter should leave him for the best man in the world; and he could not but consider as an unprincipled interloper this Richard Thirlwell, who came to claim her in this audacious way, without money, with nothing in fact but what the aunt in Providence, who stood the young man's friend, called "a good business capacity, and a most worthy character."

So, like Pharaoh, the old man hardened his heart, and would not give his consent. Elizabeth inherited a stout heart from her father, and when she pledged her faith to Richard Thirlwell, she did it with no reservation; and though she found it impossible to behave undutifully to her father, still, to break her plighted word to her lover was just as impossible to a nature as firm and resolute as hers. So far she was obedient that she did not write to Richard, and never, by word or look, did she reproach her father with his harshness. Day by day she went through her household duties with gentle cheerfulness, but there was no sign of wavering or change in her tone when one day her father referred to the subject, and she replied that she would never marry any but Richard Thirlwell while she lived.

A shadow lay between the father and daughter, a painful presence haunted their companionship; and as time went on Ezra Hooper became more and more uncomfortable, until at last, after a long internal struggle, he made the fatal concession of allowing the young man to come to visit them at the island. The manly straightforwardness of Richard was not to be resisted any more by the father than it had been by the daughter, and Ezra Hooper gave, like many another man, his consent to the inevitable, and the two were married. He certainly never had to repent his tardy consent, for, after her marriage, Elizabeth was as true and devoted a daughter as she had ever been, when she was the one joy of the old man's home.

Richard Thirlwell was, as we have said, a young man of energy, but he had shown other qualities more valuable even than the "business capacity," of which Rebecca Folgate had spoken. He had testified, under unusually trying circumstances, both goodness of heart and firmness of will. His mother had died in his infancy; and his father, when Richard was about six years old, married again, and dying not long afterwards left his young widow in straitened circumstances with the little Richard and an infant son of her own. To his step-mother Richard was warmly attached, his

dutiful affection towards her seeming quite as strong as if he had been her own son. As he grew up he early began to take upon himself some of the responsibility that weighed so heavily upon her. The younger boy was half adopted by a distant relative, under whose care he was indulged to his heart's desire and to his own ruin as it proved. A high-spirited, not very submissive child, he grew rapidly into a headstrong, self-indulgent youth, utterly unsuited to struggle patiently for his own fortune. His temper was ungoverned; and one day, in a fit of passion, he quarrelled with his rich relative, and left the house, vowing that he would never return,—a vow that, little to his own expectation, was faithfully kept. The death of his cousin almost immediately followed this outbreak, and John Thirlwell found himself without a penny in the world. The money he had hoped to possess was left to a charity, and the only mention of him in the will, was a bitter reproach.

Disappointment only seemed to embitter, not to sober, him. He made some fitful efforts, it is true, to work for his own living, but the old habits were strong and hard to eradicate, and after twice failing, he lost heart, and sought to forget his mortifications in a reckless pursuit of pleasure. Many and bitter

were the anxieties of the elder brother at this time; many and bitter the tears of his mother. And yet her love for her prodigal son seemed never ending. She wept over him and blessed him when he returned to her arms, smitten with remorse and swearing amendment, a vow which, alas! he did not keep. After one of these outbreaks of remorse he went to New York, with the pretext, and probably with the intention, of finding employment, and there falling in with some of his old companions he was again led astray. At last, after months of sickening anxiety, during which she knew nothing of her son, the poor mother's health broke down, and she became very ill. Only then came the news of her son—that he was in the town, but in the hands of the police, awaiting his trial for some act of violence committed in a drunken frolic. This was a death blow to the poor woman. The silence of the mourning house was rudely broken, when, haggard and worn, John Thirlwell burst into the very chamber of death. Discharged with a heavy reprimand, and sobered and filled with remorse, he had come to throw himself at his mother's feet once more, but instead of her forgiving arms, he found only the dreadful, impassive form under the sheet, and met the stern face of his brother, whose long-suffering had at last given

way to nothing but bitter resentment against the cause of all this sorrow and disgrace.

The meeting was stormy, and ended by John Thirlwell's rushing from the house vowing hatred against his brother. Since that hour he had never been heard of: whether, as seemed most probable, he had died at sea, or found in the far West some congenial sphere for his reckless and adventurous spirit, no one could ever say.

It was shortly after the death of his mother that Richard Thirlwell went to Providence and met Elizabeth Hooper. Not more than once had he mentioned his brother's name to her. The disgrace of his brother's history he felt acutely, and to his high-minded and well-connected wife he never told more of the story than he thought absolutely necessary. So in some degree he concealed the truth, honest man though he was, and from the tenderest soul, too, and went on living with the belief that the past was dead, with its secret. That is the way we sometimes hide our ostrich egg in the sand, and walk on thinking it dead and buried; but time and the forces of life are strong, and later, lo! the mystery has risen up alive, gigantic, and stalks the plain, to meet us and be seen of all men.

Since his marriage Richard Thirlwell had

prospered on the island. There was no man more respected in the community. He had fallen in some degree into the place of his father-in-law, the venerated Ezra Hooper, while Mrs. Thirlwell was the beloved counsellor of all in trouble and perplexity. Firm of will and gentle of spirit, she walked to and fro, in the town, in her household, the continual source of light and blessing and strength.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE is no doubt that the Thirlwells' house was the handsomest and best in the township. It had its fine farm-buildings, its ample kitchen, its five pleasant chambers with their white curtained beds and pure coverlids. It had its bright homely keeping-room and the summer parlour with its air of refinement as subtle as the charm that pervaded the primitive plainness of Mrs. Thirlwell's dress, and yet made it more attractive than the most fashionable costume. Then there was the barn-yard, with its sweet-smelling ricks, where the sleek poultry and ducks pecked about contentedly among the stones at the barn-door. Beyond the farm-yard lay the paddock, a green and breezy space, hiding under the shade of maple-trees in its farther corner, however, a quiet grove, a haunt of the earliest flowers of spring, congregations of tender-hued "Spring beauties,"

and "Quaker ladies," and a charming place for young ducks also.

It was a great delight to the Thirlwell children to sit on a fallen log near the edge of this pool, and watch, as they could any fine spring morning, the mother duck and her twelve ducklings waddling through the grass, and launching themselves on the water, where, with much splashing and anxious quacking, the small ducklings received their first lesson in the "science of life," and the twelve golden fluffy little bodies were set afloat round the sleek and contented mother duck.

Then there was the garden full of flowers tended by Mrs. Thirlwell's own hands; there was the shady bowery orchard, where the children loved to play, and where hung the rich harvest of crimson and yellow and russet fruit. Over the framework of the piazza on one side of the house clustered the vines, which in October were, underneath the trellis, purple with bunches of grapes. Then, with the first frost came a great day for the children, the grapes being then gathered in large baskets and stored away in the big pantry, and the children were allowed to assist in the work, and received wages in bunches of the small but delicious fruit. In the cool cellars below the house lay the casks of

cider made from the apples of the orchard; while wine—pleasant innocent wine—made from these grapes, lay there also for uses of hospitality and cheer.

Sweet frugality and generous love ruled the household within; industry and skill tended the substance without. The good ship "Ezra Hooper" went and returned on her voyages blessed on her course and bearing her freight of oil. So that it seemed the Scripture blessing rested upon the household; the land brought forth her increase, the vines had not failed, and the oil of gladness was shed upon the fortunes of Richard Thirlwell.

The other families of the island all more or less shared in a like degree of well-being. They were all prosperous, frugal, well-conditioned people, simple in their habits, with sufficient of material good to make life happy and contented, without allowing it to grow luxurious or even easeful.

Many of the inhabitants were fisher people, some were whalers, some small farmers, some shopkeepers and humbler tradespeople; none were very rich or very poor; all were hardy, industrious, sober-minded, and intelligent. The sternest republican code as to equality of condition governed the social life of the colony, and the Quaker simplicity of manner

and gentleness of bearing gave a refinement to the relations of the households not always found in a more complex and artificial state of society.

The long voyages made by the men on their fishing and whaling expeditions naturally threw a greater share of responsibility and care on the women of the community; and for the most part they showed as the result an extraordinary activity and energy in the control of affairs. The life of the little community, except in so far as it was stirred by the constant hazards and dangers peculiar to the sea-faring occupation of the men, was quiet and uneventful. There were the occasional visits to the "Main," when each family sailed in its own boat, and returned laden with purchases of such things as could not be bought on the island. Such visits were usually combined with attendance at the yearly or quarterly religious meetings held at one of the cities of the mainland.

The home of Millicent Keston is a sad contrast to the pleasant prosperous farm: a small house of three rooms, which is built just above high-water mark on the shore, against which the sand and shingle may drift at will, for it is sheltered by no fence, and only the sand and rocks form a rough and broken barrier against the high winter storms, which sometimes

bring the waves even to the door, and dash the spray against the windows. Behind the house is a space of cultivated ground, where John Keston grows his potatoes, corn, and turnips. That plot is reached from the door at the back of the cottage by a steep and narrow pathway, broken here and there by the rock that crops out among the dry grass. The doorway of the house, which is low and broad, enters at once into the kitchen and sitting-room.

One day, some three or four years after the hot Midsummer-day when we first saw the children on the sands, the little Milly, then a child of six years old, sat in this doorway playing quietly with a pile of pretty round pebbles and sea-weed, which she was arranging in rows, talking softly to herself the while.

"That is the father," she said, setting up a tall white pebble, "and these are the children. This is a naughty little girl that won't stand up. Stand up, little girl, or I shall be angry with you, and throw you out, and drown you in the sea again, among the large fish and the sharks; but if you are good I will love you and kiss you, and take you up to bed with me, and you shall be snug and warm under the pillow when it is dark, and the wind blows. Will you be good, stone? Dear little stone!"

In the eyes of the child the stone had a strong personality. Certain marks in its smooth surface looked like a face, and she had cherished it and played with it until, strangely enough, there had gathered round it some of the ready affection of her fond heart.

"Dear little stone," said Milly, stroking it softly, and laying it against her cheek; "will you be good and go a walk with me? and I will wash you in a pool of water, and take you to bed."

Suddenly she stopped in her tender and endearing tone. "It no good," she said; "it's a stupid horrid old stone!" And she knocked it sharply several times on the rock beside her. "There, get along with you," she cried, knitting her little brows to a scowl, and flinging the stone far down the path that led from the door. She put her two fingers in her mouth, and sat some time silent in melancholy meditation. Then the scowl gradually faded away from her face, and gave place to a more genial expression. Rising at last, she went down the pathway, and picking up the discarded stone, with a sigh she put it in her pocket, walked into the house, and out by the back-door to the rising ground behind, where the mother goat and two kids were browsing. Although the kids could not talk any more than the stones, and were wilful, tiresome little things too, they were alive and

could bleat and skip about the rocks; so Milly loved them, and had a secret respect for them too, for did they not stay out all night in the dark without being afraid? But to-day, for some reason, the kids were in a stupid matter-of-fact mood, seeming to care for nothing else than to make a good meal on the soft short grass, and refusing to be beguiled into any sport.

"I wish Peleg was here," said Milly, "I would go and ask him about it. I think I'll go and talk to him a little bit."

Now Peleg was a half-cast Indian who lived not very far from the lonely house, and was sometimes employed by John Keston to help in the busy seasons, or to stay about the place when he himself went on one of the rare journeys to the mainland. Peleg was a descendant of the Indians whom the first settlers had found on the island, and who had been made Christian and civilized under their humane and kindly influence. Peleg was a tall, bony man, with a dark, melancholy face, straight black hair, and a pair of kindly grey eyes, which were the only signs of his mixed blood. In manner he was grave and silent. Although he was a Christian, and went to meeting like other people of a Sunday morning, this practice did not prevent his retaining some of the strange and

wild beliefs of his Indian ancestry. He had a superstitious regard for the ordinary workings of nature, which he ascribed to the powers of good and evil spirits. The child Milly soon found that Peleg was in many ways like a great child, and would listen to her and tell her tales which had a strange and delightful interest about them, the more so as she had not yet learned to read, and hence had found no opportunity of gratifying her taste for the marvellous in books.

While Milly, with her bonnet hanging on her shoulders, and her two front fingers in her mouth, walks meditatively down the sands, we will see something more of her home and lonely life. You will easily perceive how lonely that life must have been when she was driven to make companions of the kids or even of the stones. Her father was usually out nearly all day working in the fields behind the house, or down on the shore setting his nets, and Milly was left to follow her own devices, and amuse herself in her own harmless and quiet way. Her father left the child very much to do as she liked; he rarely, if ever, gave her a reproof, and he was always kind in his manner towards her; but sometimes he seemed to forget that she lived at all. He would continue his long lines of hoeing on the "corn-patch" for hours, scarcely raising his eyes to

observe the child who played near. Sometimes he would sit at the fire, mending his net, his hands lying listlessly on his knees, his eyes staring vacantly into the embers with a dull melancholy that showed his mind to be occupied with hopeless and saddening recollections. Sometimes his lips moved, and he would mutter softly to himself; but it was evident that his thoughts had no connexion with his present occupations; for when the child called back his attention to the present, he would start and stare with the vague half-conscious look of a suddenly awakened sleeper.

On fine summer days Milly played on the beach, or sat in the softly rocking boat, round which the bright waves danced and lapped, while her father set his nets. When the weather was bad she went up to the attic on the roof, where she found collected a strange assortment of things, fishing-nets, tools, some old books, some broken pieces of furniture, and the like. There was a large oaken chest on one side of the room. It had a heavy lid, and Milly had only seen it opened once in her life, and the chest had for her an air of mystery and interest. It made a capital table to play on when she was tired of the narrow window-seat. The window-seat, however, was Milly's favourite corner. For two reasons the place had an in-

describable charm. The first was, that in the floor just below the ledge was a small round hole, where a knot had been removed in the boarding; but Milly never knew how the hole had been made, nor whither it led. Into it had slipped many of her treasures, some shells, a piece of pencil, a two-cent piece, and a large pearl button. She had wept bitterly over these losses at the time, but now the place of their disappearance had a charm and tender interest as the grave of her companions. There might be a secret chamber down there where might be hidden—who could say?—what unknown treasures!

So here, with this mysterious cave of Aladdin below her feet, the child used to sit sucking her fingers, and playing in her own quiet way for hours together.

But this window was connected with one of Milly's deepest joys, and certainly with one of the bitterest sorrows of her small life of six years. The window looked out towards the sea, and was sheltered by the overhanging eaves of the cottage. The heavy wooden beam supporting the door was so close to the window, that, when the upper sash was open, the child could touch it with her hand. One day, as she sat at play on the window-seat, singing softly to herself, she was suddenly struck dumb with

awe and delight by seeing a lovely bird, with sharp-pointed wings and glowing breast, fly up close to her, flutter a moment under the overhanging eaves, and then dart down again. She had scarcely drawn her abated breath when up he skimmed once more, and this time with something in his beak, fluttering a moment and was gone. So close was he that she could see his beautiful dark eyes, his soft white breast; so near that it made her heart throb with delight as if a beautiful, real angel with pointed wings, like the one in the picture Bible downstairs, had sailed into the attic. It was a pair of sea-swallows which had agreed to build their nest in this sheltered southern corner, and which seemed to regard with a feeling almost of fellowship, or at any rate of no fear, the child who sat there for hours watching them at their work. Gradually the nest grew into form, a safe, lovely home, though built, by patient love and care, out of the commonest brown clay. The gentle-eyed mother bird sat hour after hour, her small fluffy head nestled on her breast, her anxious, bright eyes gazing at the eager child, half trustful, half suspicious. Sometimes, when the mother bird, slid out of the nest and skimmed down into the sunlight, Milly could dimly discern the four bright, wonderful eggs. Milly never told her

father of the secret and wonderful joy that she had in the garret, but she thought of it when she closed her eyes at night; sometimes she dreamed of it; and often when it was growing light she crept from her bed in her night-gown—for her little room was opposite the garret—to peep at her nest. Then came the day when, miracle of miracles, four small heads appeared above the nest's rim, and the parent birds all day flew to and fro, with cheerful twitterings, and fed the hungry, never-satisfied mouths. Soft, downy jackets gradually appeared on the young birds, and day by day they grew stronger. Milly knew each one now—knew which made the most noise, and the order in which they were fed. She longed to be the swift-winged strong mother that brought them food.

"And oh," said Milly one day, as she climbed the steep stairs to the garret, "if I could only have one of those little darling, precious birds in my hand, I should never want any thing else again."

She crept to the window, trembling with impatience to behold her nest, and lo! the nest was empty, the birds gone, and Milly, in blank amazement and stupified despair, sank down on the window-sill. They might return. She watched and waited—the mother bird would come back. Milly put her little head out of

the window and called and tried to imitate their own bright twittering calls which they had seemed so well to understand. At evening she brought crumbs, and held them out till her little arms were stiff, and her heart failed, and she sank down upon the window-sill crying as if her heart would break.

This flight of the swallows may seem no very grievous thing to you or me, reader, who know that such is the course of nature, necessary for the growth of swallow-life, but to the child's deep heart and small brain this was a terrible sorrow, which filled her with a lonely feeling of disappointment and perplexity, never to be forgotten. What did she know about the ceaseless development of nature? What did she know of the great tide of life, which, with its ebb and flow of alternate light and dark, death and life, storm and rest, renews the face of the earth? Her swallows, her beautiful friends, with their bright eyes, and soft breasts, had gone, cruelly, silently gone, and left with her a mystery of perplexity and suffering.

For to know the reason of our pains goes far to heal them; and sorrows come to old as well as young when the hope, the treasure of the imagination and the heart, is swept away by some unseen power, and we stretch out our hands towards the skies with questioning and

despair. We know not nor see the higher law that rules here, and in the darkness of ignorance we despair. May we not take courage even here, believing we may be children still, and look forward to that great future, where we may "know even as we are known?"

Milly, as I said, had told this secret to no one, not even to Peleg.

Peleg was working at his nets in the sunshine, humming in a low tone to himself, when Milly wandered down the shore in search of him.

"Wal," said Peleg, looking up from his work very gravely, "what has thee got on hand this morning?"

"Nothing," said Milly, seating herself on the dry sand. "I think I want something to play with."

"Dear, dear," said Peleg, pegging down a net firmly at one side; "and where's all them shells I fetched up the other day?"

"They're all there," said Milly, pointing towards the cottage; "I buried some of them in the sand by the rock."

"Well, I declare! and what for?" asked Peleg. "Did thee think they would grow?"

Milly shook her head. "I don't like them broken," she said: "I call them dead when they are broken, and I bury them."

Peleg did not exactly know how to meet this

view, and so he said nothing. At last, breaking the silence, Milly said, "Peleg, what do birds do in the night?"

"They go to sleep, I guess, same as thee does."

"They're not afraid of the dark, I suppose; little birds, I mean—quite little ones that haven't many feathers?" said Milly, wistfully.

"Oh, no, the big birds look after them."

"Birds have to fly a long way sometimes, haven't they, Peleg?"

"Oh, yes, a mighty long way over the sea sometimes."

"But if they have to fly a long way over the sea they'll get tired and drop, and be drowned maybe?"

"Oh no, child, they don't; they know how to take care of themselves. There are some birds as knows a heap of things as we don't at all. There's the gull, they say, he knows about storms."

"About storms?" repeated Milly inquiringly.

The old man nodded his head.

"How does the gull know about such things, Peleg?"

Peleg looked up the shore and out to sea, as if to make certain that the coast was quite clear of improper listeners, and then, finding that the child with her eager face was his only audience besides the sea and sky, he said, "Well, thee sees, Milly, the winds have a place where they all

meet once in a while, round off Cape Hatteras 'tis, or somewhere's off in them parts, or some folks say as far as the South Pole."

"Yes," said Milly impatiently, "and the winds have a meeting: go on, Peleg, please go on."

"It aint a meeting like the meeting to Nantucket," said Peleg, "it's in a cave under the sea, right down."

"Miles deep?" said Milly.

"Oh! I guess so. Well, as I was sayin' the north wind, as he was a goin', met the real old gull, a monstrous big bird he is, most as big as thy little body I guess."

Milly's eyes opened wider with mingled delight and awe at this statement."

"And," continued Peleg, "the north wind began boastin' and talkin' very big, and offered to run a race with the gull. Just as they were starting the north wind ran round behind the king gull and tried to catch him by his wings, and throw him over and over down into the sea."

"How mean!" said Milly.

"Yes, but listen what happened to him. The king gull spread out his great wings, and got ahead of the wind, and flapped his great wings and tail into his face, till the wind was so blinded that he could not see his way clear, and howled for mercy; for thee sees, he was afraid that he should never reach the cave in time, and all the

winds would laugh at him. Well, then the king gull said he would let him go on condition he would carry him the rest of the way, and let him go into the cave, and listen to the pow wow of the winds. The north wind sighed and stormed, but he had to do as he was bid by the gull, who rode on his back till they came to the place in the sea above the cave; and then the north wind dived down, the king gull with him, and they sent up the waves like mountains and the spray like a snow-storm. The king gull sat at the door of the cave and listened, and heard the secret of brewing storms, and he flew out with a loud scream to tell folks the secret, as he does now on stormy nights, only very few people know the meaning of his cry, and so it does them no good."

"Oh, Peleg, does he ever come here?" said Milly, half terrified, half delighted. "Did you ever see the great king gull?"

"I can't say as I ever saw him, but I've heard him often enough."

"I don't think I want to see him very much," said Milly: "he was a great cruel thing to kick and blind the poor north wind."

Peleg was silent.

"Don't you see, Peleg? Why don't you say he was wicked?" said Milly impatiently.

"Well, I guess he isn't so bad. He tells the

other gulls, and gives them warning, so they ken look out for their young ones."

"Oh, of course," said Milly musingly; "I never thought of that. Do little birds understand the storm-cry, Peleg?"

"Well no, I guess not, not land birds."

"Not birds that build near houses, up by windows sometimes?" asked Milly wistfully.

"No, I guess not," replied Peleg, who was now going on steadily with his work again, the excitement of his story being over.

"Have they nothing to tell them of danger, and no one to look after them?"

Peleg did not reply, the subject was getting a little difficult, and, like most sensible people, Peleg took the precaution to say nothing about questions when they become difficult to solve.

Milly looked up suddenly; a new idea had seized her imagination. "I wish," she said in a low voice, "birds could pray to God, because then He would take care of them; wouldn't He, Peleg?"

Peleg looked very grave, and a good deal puzzled. "I can't rightly say: no, no, in course birds don't pray, only Christians pray. But never mind asking any more questions on them subjects, Milly."

But Milly could not let the subject go.

"Peleg," she said, after a pause, and with

great decision of manner, "I shall pray to God to take care of the small birds: I should like to very much, and I think it would be the best thing."

"There, there, child," said Peleg uneasily, "don't thee see I'm real busy and haven't time for telling thee? Go and hunt up some of them pretty stones in the little pool over there."

Milly did as she was bid, and was soon absorbed in the delight of getting fresh pebbles and shells. The old man went on steadily with his work, a little troubled with his own part in the recent conversation. "Chil'n are mighty tryin' when they gits you alone this way, and starts asking questions! I might hev told her that it says in the Scriptures that the sparrers is looked after, and that things is gen'rally counted and seed to, tho' it ain't allers so easy for us to see it; but lors! that would only hev set her off again, worse ne'r ever with questions. And," added Peleg, closing his soliloquy with a philosophical desire to make the best of a difficulty, "it can't be any great harm if she do say a word for them after all."

CHAPTER V.

NOT till Millicent Keston was more than six years old did her father send her to the public school of the island. The going to school was, of course, the beginning of a new life to the child, and in many ways, it must be owned, it was not a very happy commencement. Her strange, lonely life at home had unfitted her for immediately mixing happily with other children. Her strange, shy ways, her backwardness in learning, helped to form a barrier between her and her companions. They were for the most part healthy, sensible, matter-of-fact children, to whom the half-impetuous, half-shy child, with her nervous, excitable ways, her alternate outbursts of tenderness and passion were perplexing and uncomfortable. Then, beside all this, there was a certain shadow hanging over Milly in the school, the chilling influence of which the child herself began slowly to perceive. Children quickly adopt the feelings

of their elders, and the disapprobation with which the people looked upon John Keston was in part transmitted to their children, and by them was visited on the little Milly. Like their sensible parents, the children had good, though various reasons for treating Milly with some coldness and suspicion. She wore a red frock; her hair hung on her shoulders, instead of being neatly clipped round; she said "you," and used at times words and expressions new to their ears. She had also a strange father, who, the elder people said, had come to the island from a great distance—possibly from the West Indies or the Southern States; and, by the imaginations of the children, those far-off regions were pictured as dark places of abomination, in which coloured persons were kept in bondage, and into which "Friends' principles" had never penetrated.

An unexplained mystery in the life of any man or woman in a small community is a grievance which the popular imagination resents with energetic protest, and hastens to fill up with conjecture and surmise. It was so, at least, in the case of John Keston. Among the grave and respectable townspeople of Martin's Vineyard there were few family secrets; there could, indeed, be little to hide in lives so staid, so simple, and so pure. Each one knew the affairs of his neighbour in every particular,

from the family genealogy to the number of loaves and the quantity of butter consumed in the household. Hence the community naturally concluded that a man who never spoke of his former life, and tacitly refused to hold any intercourse with his neighbours, must have circumstances connected with his previous history of a strange, not to say of an evil, character.

One of the most serious charges brought against John Keston was, that he never left his house to go to any "place of worship" on a Sunday. When Deacon Peabody of the Independent Communion visited him to inquire into his spiritual state, John Keston replied, rather abruptly, that he was not a Church member, and had been brought up a Friend. When, shortly afterwards, Abner Price, elder of the Society of Friends, suggested the propriety of his attending meetings, John Keston said he had been disowned by the Society for so long, that he "had got out of the way of going to meeting, and hardly thought he should begin now." Whereupon the elder returned, much shocked and discomposed.

Another offence of John Keston's, I believe, filled the minds of his neighbours with a more sorrowful sense of his depravity, even than his "staying away from a place of worship:" Sunday and weekday he wore the same clothes!

He was placed almost beyond the pale of human sympathy by the fact that when, in all the serenity and respectability of Sabbath gear and manner, his neighbours streamed towards the meeting-house, he would sit in his doorway, clad in the dingy garb of the workaday world, and smoking his pipe. To many a good soul he seemed like a sad incongruous shadow thrown on the face of the quiet and cheerful Quaker Sabbath. And so, week by week, his mere presence troubled the gentler and exasperated the sterner-minded of his neighbours. Indeed, it seemed as if something must be wrong in the soul that could not throw off the burden of the days of toil, and rejoice with his fellows in that day of rest, that pause, when, for a few brief hours, the wearied hands may be folded, and the eyes look up. There must be something depraved in the heart that could not join in that dumb pathetic acknowledgment of the desire for rest which lies deep under all the commonplace of life!

About the child Milly, however, were perceptible, to a scrutinizing and charitable eye, certain signs of deference to the day. Although she played just as usual at the front of the house, her stockings and pinafore were clean and white, and her wild hair was brushed more smoothly. John Keston himself, in his thread-

bare fishing-coat, had assisted in these Sabbatical decorations; and although he found it a task of infinite trouble and perplexity, he contemplated the result with a look of excited interest on his usually apathetic face. Possibly this little figure, sitting among the dry pebbles at his feet, was the one strong link that bound the man in the wholesome tie of fellowship with his kind.

And Milly grew day by day into the knowledge that her life was different from that of her companions. The truth came to her mind by slow degrees, and through small incidents. The children were afraid of her father, and rarely walked home with her; she was seldom included in the festivities, the candy boilings, and such like times of rejoicing to the other children; she never formed one of the large parties that went to attend quarterly meetings on the "Main." The child's heart was ready enough to go out towards her companions, and eager to take what small amount of kindliness or affection they would give in return; but of all the children, Lizzie Thirlwell was the one whose favour and countenance she most ardently craved.

When, on the day that John Keston first brought his child by the hand to the schoolhouse, and the little creature had turned away, sobbing, from all the strange faces, and had

begged impetuously, in terror and dismay, to be taken home, Lizzie Thirlwell had slipped forward, and, taking her hand, had wiped her eyes, set the frightened little stranger on the bench beside her, and comforted the poor timid heart. Milly had looked up with sudden confidence to the kind face of the elder girl, and never forgot the consolation and protection. Lizzie was three years older than Milly, and since the day they had met on the sands she had grown into a tall girl for her age. She was a general favourite, and had many friends among the school-children. She was always kind to Milly when chance brought the little girl in her way, but Milly was shy, and dared not make voluntary approaches to her popular schoolmate, and Lizzie never forgot the prohibition of her mother when she said that she should feel best satisfied that Lizzie should have little to do with John Keston's little girl.

So the years passed on: Milly made good progress with her learning, though she was not a studious child. Quick and observant, she took a keen interest in every thing about her, and was never so happy as when allowed to help in any work for other people. She had still her talks with Peleg, though these were not so frequent as of old. She still wandered about the shore and the rocks, and still sat on the garret

window, sometimes with a book, but more often with her little wooden workbox, busily constructing clothes for her doll, a rather weather-beaten specimen of the race, one that her father had brought two or three years previously after a visit to Providence. With this doll Milly played and discoursed for hours. It lay in her arms at night, and by her constant caresses, its somewhat blankly staring face had been kissed and rubbed out of all expression.

As time went on there was one person whose presence began more and more to affect the child's life—a person of whom she stood in great awe. This was none other than Prudence Jones, who, once a fortnight, came to do the house-cleaning at the cottage. Something in the grim briskness of Prudence, her sharp authoritative manner, harassed Milly into perverseness, and in her own way the child perplexed and irritated the hard but well-intentioned Prudence.

"If that child ain't a real specimen," she said to herself, as she saw Milly through the open doorway running down the sands. "She's off now to hide among them rocks, and will go without her dinner sooner nor come here and sit quiet while I work. She ain't like the regular kind o' children; she's just cut out of a different piece, and you can't make nothing reasonable out of her. She's like them yaller flowers I had